

Christmas Eve Sermon 2015

John 1: 1 – 5

Woodridge

John 1: 1 - 5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Let us pray:

This past Tuesday – I read a beautiful piece on the Op-ed page of the Journal

- Perhaps you saw it

It was written by a Richard Lawrence – an English teacher at Mount St Charles in Woonsocket.

It was title, “The Violin: A Christmas Story.”

A few years back – his wife had mentioned in passing that she had always wanted to play the violin.

- And maybe someday she might try it
- But it might be kind of expensive

Her husband heard her – but said nothing.

But thought to himself – “that no dream should be dismissed.”

It did find out that a violin is quite expensive – so he dropped the idea.

Then just 2 days before Christmas

- With still no present for his wife
- He saw an ad in the paper

“Violin. Brand new. Will sacrifice for \$100.

He called and made an appointment to come look at it.

The address was in Olneyville – close to where he grew up.

He pulled up to a 3-decker – with the blinds completely drawn.

An older man answered the door and invited him in – and they sat in the living room.

“I bought this instrument a number of years ago,” he said, “but it was about that time that my wife grew sick and died. I bought it so I could play it for her but ...”

His voice trailed off, and his mind seemed to drift away to other places and people.

“It’s been sitting there in its case, and I thought that maybe it would be time for it to bring some joy into someone else’s life.”

Then he asked him if he wanted to hear it played.

He took it out of the case and began to play a tune.

He played with his eyes closed – and tears formed at the corners of his eyes.

He was clearly in a place all by himself - and years ago in his memory.

Then he stopped and put the violin back in the case and gave it to his visitor.

Give someone the gift of music. It will bring joy.”

Richard Lawrence bought the violin and left.

But he paused in the driveway looking back at the house

- and thinking about what he had just witnessed

It was the passing of a gift – a gift that had traveled through time and over several generations and now was mine to pass on.

It is both easy and hard to think about gifts this evening.

On the one hand (as we sit here) – there are gifts under our trees at home

- ready to be opened

But on the other hand – give all that we have endured this year

- suffering and death
- violence and evil
- sickness and brokenness

It is hard to think about gifts – and feeling gifted.

But even in the midst of all this – there is another gift I would like to talk about.

And that is the gift of the birth of Jesus.

And how He is a different gift from the other gifts we receive in life.

Certainly – the gifts we receive tonight or tomorrow morning

- are wonderful gifts
- gifts given with love and care

Of course - some gifts “come and go.”

- Snacks in my stocking
- Gift cards to Barnes and Nobles or Amazon

While it is also true that other gifts last forever – or at least in our memories.

- School made ornaments from my kids – hand on tree each year
- Recipe box from my mom – still have it

The gifts we receive at Christmas are often given with love and care – and are to be cherished.

In his homily last Sunday – Pope Francis spoke about the “gift of God coming to save all of humankind.

God gives us all of Himself by giving His one and only Son, who is all his joy ...

Into our sometimes broken lives – and broken world

- Once again comes the God that gives us everything
- All of God’s infinite joy

In the birth of God’s Son – Jesus – a gift freely given.

This is a gift alongside all the other gifts we will get this year

- But a greater gift
- Because it is given from the very heart of God

A heart of infinite and perfect love and mercy.

This is the greatest gift

- One to be received again this year
- And to be passed on from generation to generation.

Let us pray:

